

Reedsburg man graduates from Air Force Academy - Jameson Voss one of three brothers from Reedsburg in the military.

REEDSBURG-Baraboo resident Mary Anne Stewart recalls a wave of emotion filling her May 31 as she affixed the duo gold bars of a U.S. Air Force 2nd lieutenant to the shoulders of her son, Joseph "Joey" Dumas, during a ceremony at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo. On the same graduation day, rural LaValle farmer Randy Voss looked on as his son's fiancée, Lacey Werner of Reedsburg, placed the same symbol of rank and service to the nation on his son, Jameson Voss. The couple have since married and Lacey is the daughter of Ruth and Brandt Werner.

Voss now has three sons in the military, his oldest, Jordon, is a Navy pilot and his younger son, Jon, is in Army officer training at West Point.

Both newly commissioned officers, graduates of Baraboo High School and Reedsburg Area High School, respectively, earned their bars after years of hard work, dedication and unusually great achievement, Steve Strabel of Portage said. He is a retired Air Force major who works as a liaison in this area to help prepare high school graduates seeking entrance to the prestigious military academy.

Jameson graduated with top honors for his military, academic and athletic skills, Strabel said. He will begin medical training as his next assignment.

Dumas received top honors for his academic skills and a degree in aeronautical engineering. He will be attending an elite NATO fighter pilot training at Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas next, Strabel said.

Both young men shared leadership of the 4,000 cadets during the summer of 2005, he said.

"It is very rare for two such outstanding students from the same area, at the same time, to go to a service academy and do so well for themselves," Strabel said. "These kids are really sharp."

Second Lt. Dumas said he has 60 days of leave and will be going to Europe with friends next week. In August he returns to continue his Air Force training in an area where he has demonstrated some aptitude.

"I want to be a fighter pilot," he said.

The Academy was a very challenging, disciplined and demanding experience, Dumas said. He mentioned missing some of the freedom students in a conventional university experience would have. But officer training also had its own rewards including getting to know himself better and gaining confidence.

"You're all committed to serving the country, (you share) pretty strong bonds and experiences along the way," he said. "For instance, the free-fall parachute program that I went through after my freshman year, it was one of the most thrilling experiences of my life."

Dumas said he experienced combat survival training and then went back to teach the course. It is part of basic training for all academy cadets and involves learning survival techniques and sometimes only having one meal a day or less.

"It's simulating if you're a downed pilot behind enemy lines," he said. "You're moving around at night - you're not supposed to get caught."

Randy Voss said many members of his extended family have military experience, and he has always tried to promote a sense of respect for those in uniformed services. However, he was surprised by his son's great success at the Academy and his choice to become a military doctor.

"Jameson has always been a very unique person," he said. "He's a constant source of surprise." Jameson Voss said he is experiencing double excitement from becoming a commissioned officer and marrying his high school sweetheart. He spoke to Capital Newspapers from Andrews Air Force Base Thursday where he was completing some paperwork before taking Lacey on a honeymoon to Europe and the African nation of Namibia.

He said his interest in becoming an Air Force officer extends as far back as middle school. Academy training was a real challenge though.

"At the very beginning I had some trouble submitting to authority," Voss said. "I learned a lot more respect for other people, people in authority and my peers."

While the Air Force is a very secular institution, Voss said his faith in God helped him grow and develop in that demanding environment.

When he returns in August Voss will begin medical training at the Uniform Services University of Health Sciences. While it will be years before he finally selects a specialty, he said he thinks he wants to become an orthopedic surgeon.

Voss said he is aware of the responsibility of being a military officer in a time when the nation is at war. He hopes the situation will inspire him to make a contribution and as a doctor save the lives of wounded people, soldiers, civilians and even the enemy.

"There have been a couple articles about the incredible life-saving things that are going on right now overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan. It's amazing the way we have pushed medical technology in order to save lives."

Randy Voss said he is concerned that we are in a period of chaos worldwide and things are going to get worse. He expressed pride in his son and other young soldiers.

"They are hoping to protect the United States and bring order to a chaotic world," Randy said.

Both parents say they pray for the welfare of their young soldiers.

Jameson recalled that several other young men from RAHS have joined the National Guard and are likely to be assigned to protect their country. He downplays the sacrifices he is making in comparison to what they could face.

"I don't think I'm any kind of a hero," he said. "I've had some incredible experiences, those (classmates) are the real heroes."

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